

# **Bolstering Academic Oral Language For English Language Learners Through Structured Classroom Interaction**

Arizona Department of Education  
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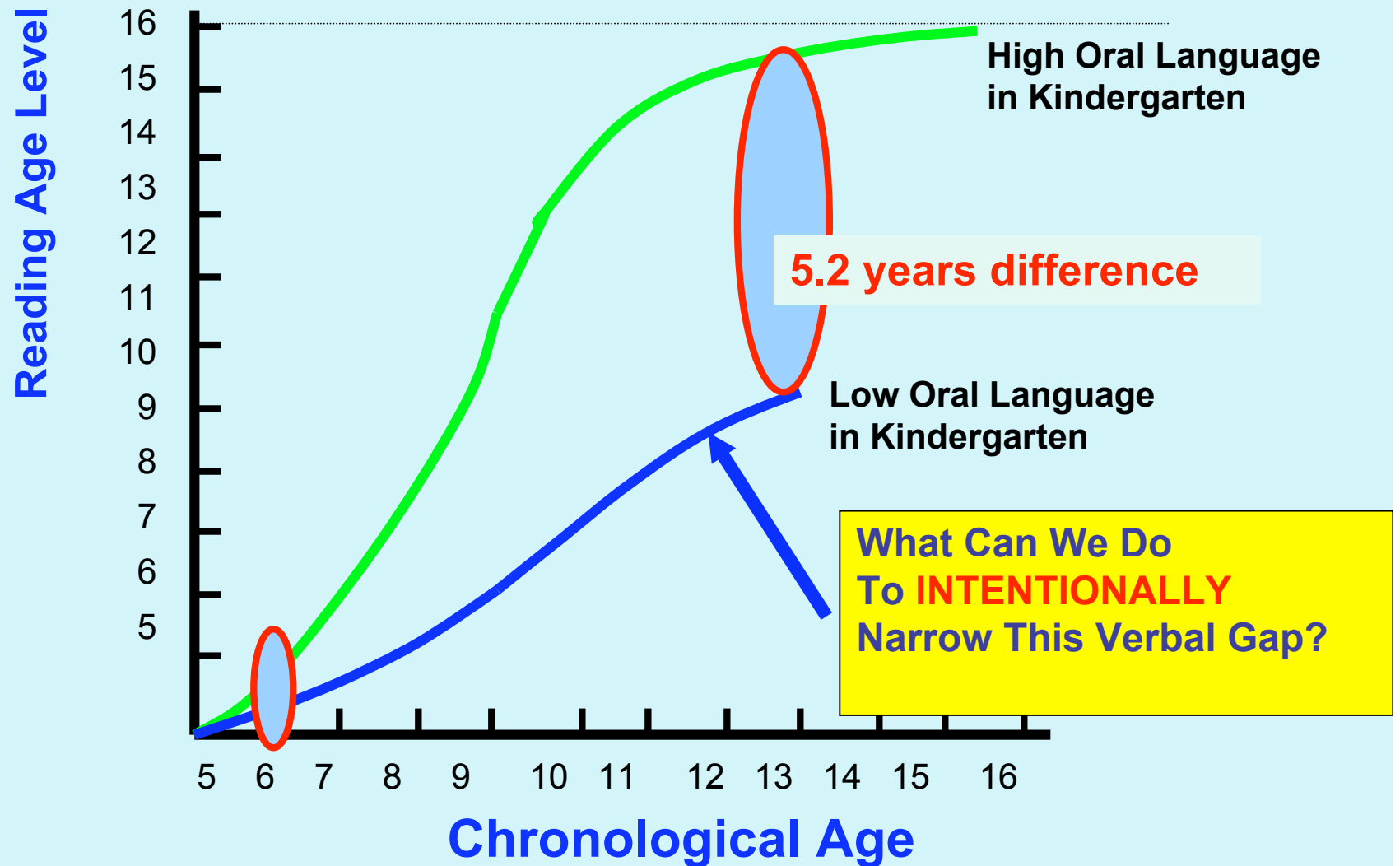
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# Workshop Components

- Research-based rationale for structured, accountable academic interaction in mixed-ability classrooms
- Viewing of taped lessons with structured learner engagement and language use
- Hands-on demonstration of structured academic language use
- Recommendations for effectively structuring academic interaction
- Practice preparing response starters and vocabulary banks for diverse proficiency levels
- Guidelines for partnering students for productive interaction
- Tips on getting more students to participate in class discussions

# The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth & Academic Achievement

(Hirsch, 1996)



# Learning Journal Reflection by an Adolescent English Learner

“The class where I think I am a passive person is my English class because in English I can’t express what I want. Yes, I do say a little bit, but not how I would like to. I don’t feel like *participate* because I am afraid to say something wrong or *pronunciate* a word badly. I don’t like to be wrong and I think it is better to be quiet than to be wrong. That’s why I think I am a passive learner in English class, because I don’t want to be *shamed*.”

Consuelo (9th grade)  
Step to College Class  
Dr. Kinsella, Fall 2002

# Learner Engagement

Kinsella & Feldman

To attract and maintain a learner's interest and active involvement in all lesson content and related tasks, with clearly articulated verbal or non-verbal “evidence checks” of a concrete, productive, and behaviorally observable response to instruction.

- Underline a significant detail.
- Thumbs up if you agree.
- Add a relevant example to the graphic organizer.
- Share your perspective with your partner.

## **Specific Engagement Strategies Introduced by Dr. Anita Archer to the 4th Grade Class**

- Allow no hand raising: everyone responds
- Use choral responses: verbal and physical
- Model active listening: look, lean, whisper
- Teach vs. anticipate desired student responses
- Structure partner interactions: assign 1s and 2s

# Think-Pair-Share

What active, accountable learner behaviors and norms have you clearly established and modeled as expectations for all students in your classroom/school?

**Starter:** One active learner norm I have established is \_ (verb + -ing \_)

- *responding in a “public voice” during unified-class discussions.*

# Evidence Checks of Learner Engagement

## Nonverbal Responses:

- Point to the word *hard*.
- Check to see if your partner found the word *hard*.
- Point to #1 and see if your partner is in the right place.
- Raise your hand if you and your partner talked about this meaning of *hard*.
- 3-2-1 eyes up here.

# Evidence Checks of Learner Engagement

## Verbal Choral Responses:

- Everyone say *hard*.

## Verbal Partner Responses:

- I know that one meaning of *hard* is...  
and twos you can go first.

# Think-Pair-Share

## Observation and Discussion Task:

Identify the specific ways in which this 8th grade English teacher structures the students' lesson engagement.

**Starter:** She structured students' lesson engagement by (verb + -ing)

- *directing their attention to the written task on the overhead.*

## **Lesson Planning Questions Focused on Lesson Content Delivery**

- What content standards will I address?
- What materials, activities and media will I utilize to best address these standards?
- What exemplars of quality work will I provide to illustrate my lesson expectations?
- How will I productively and manageably assess student learning?

# **Lesson Planning Questions**

## **Focused on Learner Lesson Engagement**

- What language and literacy support must I integrate during my lesson?
- When and how should I interrupt my instruction to elicit a student response?
- What will be my “evidence checks” that students are responding to my instruction?

# Vocabulary Knowledge Rating

**Rating Scale:** 1 = I don't know it at all.

2 = I've seen or heard it before.

3 = I have some understanding.

4 = I can teach it.

Word	Rating	What I Think This Word Means
conflict		
involve		
resolution		

# Lesson Observation Task

Identify two missed opportunities to enhance student lesson engagement by structuring their nonverbal or verbal responses in this mixed-ability 8th grade English Language Arts.

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■

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## Response Starter:

She could have enhanced student engagement by  
(verb + ing: *directing them to* \_\_, *providing* \_\_)

# Lesson Reflection Task

Select the class you are teaching that has the greatest range of proficiency in language and literacy. Recall the lesson you taught yesterday. Identify one missed opportunity to scaffold students' verbal response and bolster their academic language proficiency.

## Response Starter:

*When I asked students to \_\_\_\_ (verb phrase),  
I could have provided this response frame:*

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# Vocabulary Knowledge Rating Response Starters

- I know that one meaning of \_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_
- I think \_\_\_\_ could mean \_\_\_\_.
- I am not familiar with the word/term \_\_\_\_.
- I have no idea what \_\_\_\_ means.
- We feel confident that we know what \_\_\_\_ means,  
but we would appreciate some assistance with \_\_\_\_.

# **Productive Ways to Check for Understanding in Mixed-Ability Classes**

Do one of the following tasks:

- Tell everyone to write one question they have about the assigned task. Call on 2-3 students representing a range of proficiency to share, then address their concerns.
- Tell partner #1 to explain to #2 what they are supposed to do. Tell #2 to confirm or clarify the task expectations. Monitor explanations. Call on a student to explain who clearly understands.

# Productive Ways to Check for Understanding in Mixed-Ability Classes

Do one of the following tasks:

- If the assignment is a series of similar tasks (e.g., solving 5 problems, writing 3 future tense sentences), have students complete the first task and monitor for problems.
- Distribute three colored cards (green, yellow, red) for students to hold up at your signal to communicate nonverbally their level of comprehension after you give instructions or cover critical content:
  - Green = I clearly understand.
  - Yellow = I am a little confused.
  - Red = I am very confused.

# Evidence of the Dire Need for Structured Cognitive and Linguistic Engagement in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms



- English learners are typically passive observers during lesson discussions, and neither prepared linguistically or held accountable for contributing.
- Only 4% of English Learners' school day is spent engaging in student talk.
- Only 2% of English Learners' day is spent discussing focal lesson content (but not necessarily using relevant academic language).

Arreaga-Mayer & Perdomo-Rivera, 1996

# Methods of Ensuring More Democratic Participation

- Partner students to share individual responses (to ensure everyone responds) before calling on random individuals and volunteers during the unified-class discussion.
- Place names on cards or popsicle sticks and call on students randomly (after partner responses).
- Monitor students' written responses and verbal responses during partnering. "Nominate" 2-3 students to jump-start the discussion: "I plan to call on you to share this idea during our discussion"; "I would like you to be our discussion jumper cable and share this response."

# Methods of Ensuring More Democratic Participation

- Use the “Popcorn” response strategy and allow the student who has just participated to select the next participant.
- Divide the room into quadrants/areas and select a participant from each area to respond or have students popcorn from one area to the next.
- Use the “Numbered Heads” group participation structure and assign students a number 1-4. Pose a question to the class, specify the collaboration time (30-60 secs.) for group members to discuss their response, call on a number, then call on various students with that number to respond.

# Structured Academic Talk

## Think-Write-Pair-Share

### Discussion Task:

Why do teachers working with struggling readers and English learners tend to contribute the majority of the ideas during critical class discussions?

# Vocabulary Tool Kit Words

**contribute** to give or share something

con•trib•ute

*verb*

SP *contribuir*

**critical**

cri•ti•cal

*adjective*

SP *critico*

1) saying something is bad

2) **very important**

# Think-Write-Pair-Share

**Starter:** Many \_\_\_\_ (describing word: **adjective**) teachers tend to contribute the majority of the ideas during critical class discussions because they \_\_\_\_ (action word: **verb**)

**Adjectives:** *content area teachers, secondary teachers*

**Verbs:** *suspect, fear, don't understand, lack*

**Model:** Many reading intervention teachers tend to contribute the majority of the ideas during critical class discussions *because they haven't adequately prepared their students for a confident response.*

# Discussion Ground Rules

- No hand-raising until I ask for volunteers.
- Use your public discussion voice: two times slower and three times louder than conversation.
- Sit up straight and keep hands away from your face.
- Use the assigned sentence starter to share ideas.
- Listen attentively and jot down one new idea.
- Acknowledge similarities before sharing your idea.

# Language for Class Discussions: **Acknowledging Similarities**

- Casual Conversational English

Oh yeah. I know.

That's right.

- Formal Spoken and Written English

My idea/experience/observation is similar to \_\_'s.

I agree with \_\_. I also think that ...

My idea builds upon \_\_'s.

# Gradual Release of Responsibility

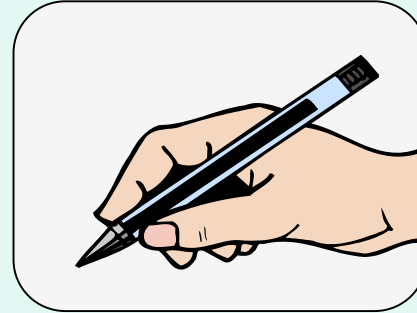
**I do it**



**You do it**



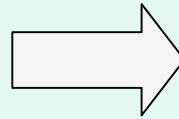
Think



(Write)



Pair



Share

## **Steps in Setting Up: Think-Write-Pair-Share**

- Direct students' attention to the written task.
- Provide a sentence starter to frame responses.
- Provide a word bank to bolster vocabulary use.
- Model a response, verbally and in writing.
- Clarify the sentence structure and/or grammar necessary for an appropriate response.
- Monitor students' writing process.

# **Steps in Facilitating Discussion: Think-Write-Pair-Share**

- Partner students to rehearse responses.
- Assign active listening and note-taking tasks.
- Jump-start with a “nominated volunteer.”
- Require use of public voices and the starter.
- Randomly call on a few students before soliciting volunteers.
- Refrain from offering your perspective until students have had ample opportunity to share.

## **Tips for Dealing with “Fast Finishers” During Structured Discussions**

- Assign a second idea using the same starter.
- Assign a second more complex starter.
- Prompt students to raise their pencil to signal they have written a thoughtful, edited response for you to “green light” to be a potential discussion jumper cable.
- Make students report their partner’s idea.
- Provide an incentive for writing a thoughtful second response (e.g., a quiz pass, preferred seating).

# Language For Class Discussions: Reporting Someone Else's Idea

- **Casual Conversational English**

\_\_\_ said that ...

\_\_\_ told me that ...

- **Formal Spoken and Written English**

\_\_\_ pointed out that ...      According to \_\_\_,

\_\_\_ indicated that ...

\_\_\_ observed that ...

\_\_\_ emphasized that ...

# Sample Assignment Pass

## Assignment Pass

This pass entitles \_\_\_\_\_ to one free Reading Journal entry or Vocabulary Quiz. This pass cannot be used for a workshop paragraph or project.

# Academic Register vs. Social Register

**Task:** What are common challenges faced by U.S. immigrants?

## Students' Default Conversational Register (Vernacular)

*Jobs. A new culture. You have to learn English.*

## Formal Academic Discussion Register

*One common challenge faced by immigrants is learning a new language.*

## Formal Written Academic Discourse (Expository Essay, Chapter)

*Recent immigrants to the United States face many predictable challenges. One challenge experienced by most newcomers is learning an entirely different language. English communication and literacy skills are critical for adult immigrants if they want to have a well paid job or attend college. However, due to the fact that the majority of recent adult immigrants ...*

## Response Frame in Academic Register

One common challenge faced by new immigrants is \_ (verb + ing)  
*learning a new language.*

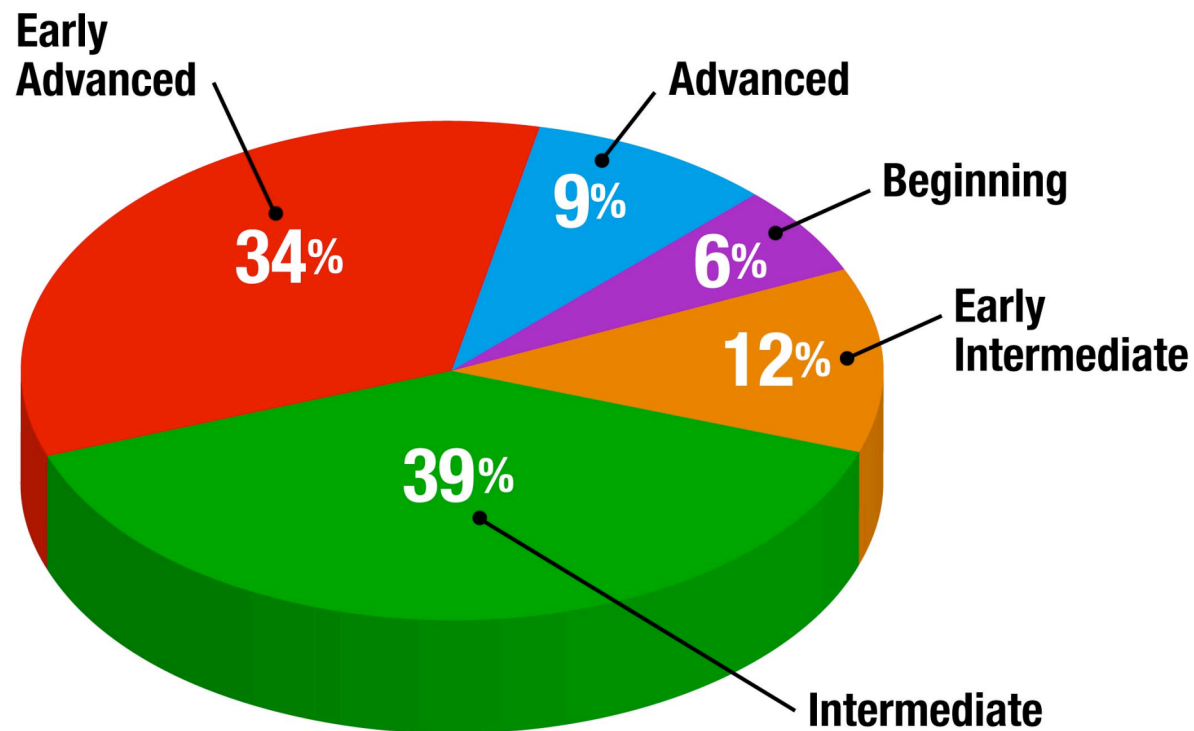
**Word Bank:** *learning \_*  
*dealing with \_*  
*finding \_*  
*understanding \_*

## Response Frame in Academic Register

From the video/article, I learned that some child workers have \_ (adjective) jobs such as \_ (verb + -ing) \_.

**Word Bank:** *difficult*      *cleaning* \_  
*dangerous*      *carrying* \_  
*unsanitary*      *building* \_  
*tedious*      *planting* \_

## English Proficiency Levels (Grades 4–8)



Source: CELDT 2007–2008

# Preparing Appropriate Sentence Starters Requires:

- Familiarity with your students' reading and language proficiency levels
- Some practical English language knowledge
- Conscientious analysis of the conceptual and linguistic demands of lessons
- Writing the starters before the lesson begins, on a board, transparency, etc. (versus “on the fly”)

# Response Starters Considering Levels of English Proficiency

**Task:** Why do many people decide to immigrate to the U.S.?

- Early Intermediate
  - People immigrate to have better \_  
(**noun:** *jobs, schools, neighborhoods*)
- Intermediate
  - People from many countries immigrate \_  
(**infinitive verb:** *to find, to escape*)
- Early Advanced
  - People from diverse countries immigrate to the U.S. due to \_ (**noun:** *war, poverty*) in their homeland.

# Response Starters Considering Levels of English Proficiency

**Task:** What are characteristics of an effective lesson partner?

- Early Intermediate
  - An effective lesson partner is \_  
(**adjective**: *helpful, polite, prepared*)
- Intermediate
  - An effective lesson partner tries \_  
(**infinitive verb**: *to help..., to complete...*)
- Early Advanced
  - I appreciate working with a partner on lesson tasks who \_  
(**verb + -s**: *assists..., respects...*)

# Write Appropriate Starters for this Structured Discussion Task

**Discussion Task:** What are two things teachers can do to get more students to participate in class discussions?

**Word Bank:**

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**Basic Starter:**

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**Challenge Starter:**

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# Write Appropriate Starters for this Structured Discussion Task

**Discussion Task:** How do plastic bags harm the environment?

**Word Bank:**

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**Basic Starter:**

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**Challenge Starter:**

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# **How to Effectively Assign a Sentence Starter with English Learners and Basic Readers**

- Display the starter using one color.
- Add your response using another color.
- Read your entire response with expression.
- Point out the grammatical expectations for writing a complete sentence using the starter.
- Provide a relevant word bank to stimulate thinking and more precise language use.

# Think-Pair-Share

## Discussion Task:

What are two important factors to consider when partnering students in mixed-ability classes for important lesson tasks?

**Starter:** One important factor to consider is a student's \_\_\_ (*noun phrase*)

- *attendance record*

# Pragmatics of Structuring Partners

## 1. **Teacher Assigns** based on:

- level of \_\_\_\_\_
- proficiency in English (oral language, \_\_\_\_\_)
- subject matter \_\_\_\_\_
- performance on standardized tests (\_\_\_\_\_)
- social skills; ability to \_\_\_\_\_
- lesson \_\_\_\_\_
- attendance record
- alternate ranking (#1 w/ #16, #15 w/ #30), no highs w/lows

# Pragmatics of Structuring Partners

2) Integrate brief, structured partner tasks in every lesson rather than periodically:

- to foster a collaborative learning climate.
- to maximize the number of students who actually during a critical discussion or task.
- to ensure that partnering tasks are familiar efficient routines rather than random activities.

# Pragmatics of Structuring Partners

- 3) Identify partner roles: 1 and 2 and specify roles: Partner 1 share first, etc.
- 4) Change partners routinely:  
at the end of a unit, month, quarter.
- 5) Avoid partnering the most proficient students with the least proficient or two struggling students.

## **Pragmatics of Structuring Partners**

- 6) Determine two reliable “floaters” who can work productively with a student missing a partner.
- 7) Assign sentence frames that structure competent and confident verbal responses.
- 8) Limit tasks to 30 seconds - 2 minutes.

# Reasons to Routinely Factor in Thinking and Writing Time Prior to Class Discussion

*We decided that...*

*We agreed that...*

*We concluded that...*

*We determined that...*

- It provides the teacher with an “evidence check” of student thinking and response to instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# **Tandem Goals for All Lessons:**

## **Academic Content & Academic Language**

- Developing critical conceptual, linguistic and strategic foundations to prepare students for lesson tasks;
- Improving students' ability to articulate lesson understandings and perspectives in speaking and writing.

# Web Sources for Dr. Kinsella's Resources

- The California Department of Education's Office of Middle School and High School Support: Taking Center Stage Act II (TCSII) will offer a series of four webinar sessions addressing Middle Grades taught by Dr. Kinsella, including video clips and other practical downloadable resources related to engaged accountable learning, explicit vocabulary development and structured academic interaction.
- Santa Clara County Office of Education, Division of School Improvement Services will post a vast array of resources from my institute on Oct. 22-23, 2008 entitled "Developing Academic Discourse Skills for English Learners in Grades 4-12 Through Teacher-Mediated Discussion and Writing."